

Interview with Brysen Angeles of the Massive Monkees

Brysen Angeles of the Massive Monkees on his exchange experience:

“I think it’s pretty safe to say I was more affected by the kids than them of me/us...I had such a great time interacting with them and feeling their energy during the Hip Hop workshops and it actually made me more appreciate the value of it myself. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to share this with youth in another part of the world. They are so far away yet so close in spirit to the kids who live in my neighborhood at home in the U.S. In several of the schools it was funny to see how some of the kids were hesitant and even had a bit pompous attitude at the beginning of the workshops but soon enough were totally engaged and having fun participating. It’s the same story here and it’s awesome to see how effective Hip Hop dance is in relating to and engaging youth. Aside from meeting them in the schools it was great to see some of the kids at the Floor Wars competition. I am glad some of the kids got to experience that because of events like Floor Wars they get to see what we are all able to accomplish through art. Also they got to see how boundaries are overcome and bridges are built between young adults of different countries, cultures, religions, etc... We all build community through Hip Hop culture and I think that’s important for the youth to see. At the end of the day, our exchange experience in Denmark was truly amazing and I hope everybody else involved was as happy with the outcome as I was.”

On how his exchange experience impacted his understanding of diversity and pluralism in Denmark and America:

“I experienced children of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds all working together, communicating, and having fun in the dance workshops... Although just like in the U.S., there were schools that are predominant. I think the great thing though is that through learning something new like breakdance, they all lowered their guard and pride and just had fun together.”

On the most personally rewarding part of his exchange experience:

“I teach dance to youth regularly in and around my home city Seattle and I see how responsive they are to the positive aspects of Hip Hop dance and culture. I see how willing they are to learn and how hungry they are to accomplish more.... Until I taught in Denmark, I assumed it’s because breakdance is the "In" thing right now and that it’s a trend that I am lucky to be involved in. Now I don't know how saturated with Hip Hop the media is in Denmark or how much access the kids in Denmark have to breakdance but I do know by the time we left they were having a great time and wanted more. So I think the most rewarding thing I left with was a further realization of how powerful this tool is in connecting with and engaging young people.”

On how break dancing brings people from so many different countries and cultures together:

“Breakdance is a part of real Hip Hop... Hip Hop in its true sense is a culture for all people... accepting to anybody only under the laws, religion and faith of Peace, Unity, Love, Understanding and Having Fun! It doesn't separate any of us from each other and so it can only keep us together.”